

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 FEA-01 OES-03 INT-05

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5811

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EO 11652 NA

TAGS SENV CA

SUBJ EASTPORT REFINERY APPROVED - SUPERTANKERS VETOED:

PRESS REPORT

1. LOCAL PRESS HAS GIVEN RELATIVELY HEAVY COVERAGE TO ALLEGED DECISION BY MAINE ENVIRONMENT BOARD TO APPROVE PITTSTON EASTPORT REFINERY, WHILE VETOING PITTSTON PLAN TO BRING SUPERTANKERS INTO HEAD HARBOR PASSAGE. OTTAWA JOURNAL MARCH 4 IN ITEM DATELINED WASHINGTON (BY FRANK RUTTER) SAID THAT MAINE BOARD "...SANK AN OIL COMPANY'S PLAN TO ROUTE SUPERTANKERS THROUGH HAZARDOUS CANADIAN WATERS TO A UNITED STATES REFINERY...THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOR OF THE PITTSTON COMPANY APPLICATION TO BUILD A REFINERY...BUT THE BOARD ALSO VOTED...AGAINST PITTSTON'S TANKER ROUTE, THROUGH HEAD HARBOR PASSAGE... THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ERE MADE AT A MEETING IN WHICH THE BOARD INSTRUCTED ITS STAFF TO PREPARE A FORMAL RULING WHICH WILL BE ISSUED ON MARCH 12. THE BOARD'S INSTRUCTIONS APPARENTLY HEAD OFF A CANADA-US COLLISION ON THE TANKER ROUTE." ARTICLE

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GOES ON TO REVIEW BACKGROUND OF CASE AND TO OUTLINE

POTENTIAL "BITTER DISPUTE" WHICH COULD BE EXPECTED BETWEEN US AND CANADA IS THE BOARD APPROVED THE TANKER ROUTE.

2. COMMENT: ENVIRONMENT CANADA AND EXTAFF OFFICIALS WHO HAVE FOLLOWED THE CASE VERY CLOSELY CONFIRMED ABOVE REPORT. IT IS THEIR UNDERSTANDING THAT FINAL VOTE ON MARCH 12 WILL STILL BE NECESSARY ON THE TWO MOTIONS (ONE TO APPROVE A REFINERY, PRODUCT DOCK AND SYSTEM, SUBJECT TO STRINGENT CONDITIONS FOR OUTWARD-BOUND PRODUCT TANKERS, SUCH AS DOUBLE BOTTOMS AND NAVIGATIONAL AIDS; THE OTHER DISAPPROVING INWARD-BOUND PASSAGE FOR SUPERTANKERS TRANSPORTING CRUDE). GOC OFFICIALS HOLD VIEW THAT PITTSTON'S INTEREST WILL DIMINISH CONSIDERABLY SINCE THEY THINK PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR REFINERY AT EASTPORT WAS DEEP-WATER FACILITIES IT OFFERED FOR SUPERTANKERS. GOC OFFICIALS ARE UNDER IMPRESSION "VOTE" MENTIONED IN LOCAL NEWS ARTICLE WAS IN NATURE OF "STRAW VOTE." THEY ALSO INTERPRET BOARD'S PROCEDURE OF ANNOUNCING ITS POSITION IN ADVANCE OF FORMAL RULING AS REPRESENTING "TRIAL BALLOON," PURPOSE OF WHICH HAS THEM SOMEWHAT MYSTIFIED. CONSEQUENTLY, GOC OFFICIALS, WHILE ENCOURAGED BY DEVELOPMENTS ARE WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT UNTIL FORMAL RULING IN HAND.
PORTER

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